

## HOUSE RESOLUTION 40

By Hardaway

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of the Honorable Anthony Johnson.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of the Honorable C. Anthony "Tony" Johnson, who so ably served the people of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Judge Johnson was remembered by his colleagues and close friends as a dedicated and highly respected jurist and as a man of great integrity who did not shy away from handling controversial cases; and

WHEREAS, C. Anthony "Tony" Johnson was born in Memphis on November 16, 1947, to proud parents Mr. and Mrs. Ollie Bernard and Emma Tom Johnson; he graduated with honors from Father Bertrand High School in Memphis, having been a successful football player, band member, and National Honor Society inductee; and

WHEREAS, upon graduation he immediately entered Fisk University in Nashville, becoming a third-generation Bulldog as he followed in the footsteps of his mother, a 1935 graduate, and his grandfather, T. J. Clinisson, a member of the Class of 1904; and

WHEREAS, during his years at Fisk, Mr. Johnson became a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated, and maintained an active membership and close contact with his fraternity brothers throughout his life; and

WHEREAS, graduating in 1969 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History, Tony Johnson became one of the first African Americans to be admitted to the University of Tennessee College of Law, earning his Doctor of Jurisprudence in 1972; and

WHEREAS, passing the bar exam on his first attempt, Attorney Johnson practiced civil rights law at Memphis' first integrated law firm, Ratner, Sugarman, Lucas and Salky, working with some of the most distinguished civil rights attorneys of the region; and

WHEREAS, named the firm's youngest partner in 1975, during his time with the firm he had the opportunity to contribute to several historical cases of the era, including involvement in the latter appeals of Brown v. Board of Education; and

WHEREAS, in 1976, a sudden vacancy on the City Court led then-Mayor Wyeth Chandler to appoint Mr. Johnson to his first judgeship; after serving out the remainder of the appointed term he successfully campaigned to retain the seat, becoming the youngest African American judge in the United States at the age of twenty-eight; and

WHEREAS, the longest serving judge in Shelby County, in 1982, Judge Johnson won election to one of the newly created Criminal General Sessions Court seats, assuming the bench in Division X, and won subsequent re-elections in 1990, 1998, and 2006; and

WHEREAS, Judge Tony Johnson was a respected member of the National Bar Association and the American Bar Association, serving in a number of leadership roles, including his most recent post as national chairperson for the ABA Committee for Alternative Sentencing; and

WHEREAS, Judge Johnson is survived by his wife, Sharon Johnson; two sons, Collin Anthony Johnson and Terrence Galen Johnson; one daughter, Tiffany Gayle Johnson; two daughters-in-law, Shavon M. Johnson and LaTasha M. Johnson; his former wife and the mother of his children, Andrea "Cookie" Morrow; six grandchildren, Landon Anthony, Dillon Myles, Christian Anthony, Caedon Matthew, Bryson Matthew, and Seth Edryd; and two brothers, O. Bernard Johnson and Charlton Cox Johnson, along with a wealth of dear friends, devoted colleagues, and beloved family members; and

WHEREAS, he is described by those who knew him best as a man of integrity who always displayed impartiality on the bench, and possessing an uncanny ability to show genuine respect for all lawyers, staff, defendants, and cases – no matter how large or small. A very wise and caring man, Judge Johnson will be sorely missed; and

WHEREAS, Judge Johnson leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the extraordinary life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we honor the memory of the Honorable C. Anthony Johnson, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Judge Johnson.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.